

# Child Abuse

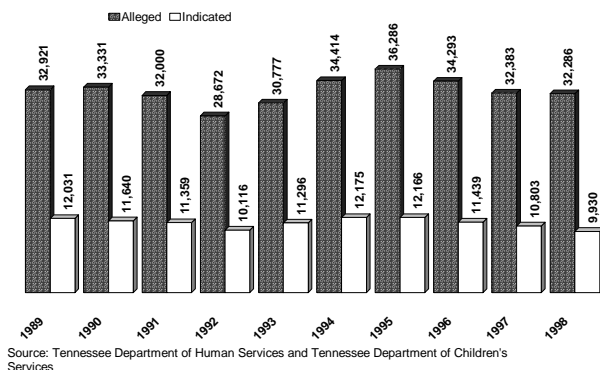
Although the number of reported cases of child abuse was slightly lower for 1998 than in 1997, the number is still alarming. The Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS) estimates that 32,286 reports of child abuse and neglect were received in 1998. Of these investigations, 9,930 cases were estimated to be substantiated. There was slightly more than a 1 percent reduction in child abuse cases in 1998 from the previous year.

## Types of abuse

1. **Neglect.** The most common form of abuse. Children can be considered neglected if their caregiver does not provide for them emotionally, physically, and/or medically. Infants and children who are categorized as failure to thrive are considered to have been neglected. In 1998 45 percent of the children included in the category of Abuse and Neglect were cases of neglect.
2. **Physical Abuse.** A non-accidental physical injury of a child. Examples are beatings, bites, burns, strangulation, scalding resulting in bruises, welts, fractures, or serious internal injuries. Of the total number of child abuse cases in 1998, 26 percent were physical.
3. **Sexual Abuse.** Forced sexual contact of any nature, either physical or non-physical, between a child and an adult. Of all child abuse cases in 1998, 18 percent were sexual.
4. **Emotional.** A pattern of maladaptive behavior that attacks emotional development or sense of self worth. Of the total child abuse cases in 1998, 0.7 percent were emotional.

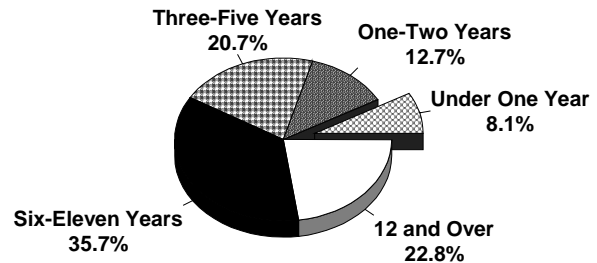
Statistics provided by DCS report that an overwhelming number of children are abused or neglected by their parents, stepparents, neighbors, or someone else living in the home. These cases account for 83 percent of all reported cases. School, child care, institutional staff, or foster/adoptive parents are alleged perpetrators in less than 3.5 percent of cases. Strangers are perpetrators in only 2 percent of the total cases. Victims of abuse tend to be young children. Forty-one percent of the reported cases involve children 0 to 5 years of age. Children age 6 or older are 58 percent of the reported cases. In Tennessee, citizens having knowledge of or called upon to render aid to a child who has suffered an injury of a reasonably suspicious nature are required by law to report such incidents to law enforcement, juvenile court, or DCS.

## Number of Alleged/Indicated Child Abuse/Neglect Victims, 1988-1998



## Tennessee Child Abuse/Neglect Reports

by Age of Alleged Child Victim, 1998



Source: Tennessee Department of Children's Services

DCS is responsible for investigating allegations of abuse and neglect. If the investigation determines that an incident of abuse occurred, it is declared to be "indicated." If it is concluded that abuse did not occur, it is declared "unfounded." If the report is indicated, DCS arranges for services to be provided to protect the child. The child's family is also provided services to enable the family to remain together or to reunify the family if the child must be removed from the home.